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No. 49. FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1943 Price 2d.

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By EMILE GRIMSHAW.

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The novice has to be toughened, the recruit must learn to throw his shoulders back and march like the old hand. That is the harsh but purposeful rule of life. It is something no textbook can teach, no teacher propound.

Every man is self-taught. The best a teacher can do is to explain to the pupil how best the pupil can teach himself. An experienced teacher who has bought his knowledge other than with coin of the realm can help a lot if only by giving advice on the sort of armour that is required by the young and inexperienced before the latter start their adventures.

The first thing a would-be player of a fretted-instrument usually wants to know is "Will it be difficult?" or "Will it take me long to learn?" The answer depends mainly on the would-be player himself: the amount of his enthusiasm, the extent of his vision and his ability to think for himself.

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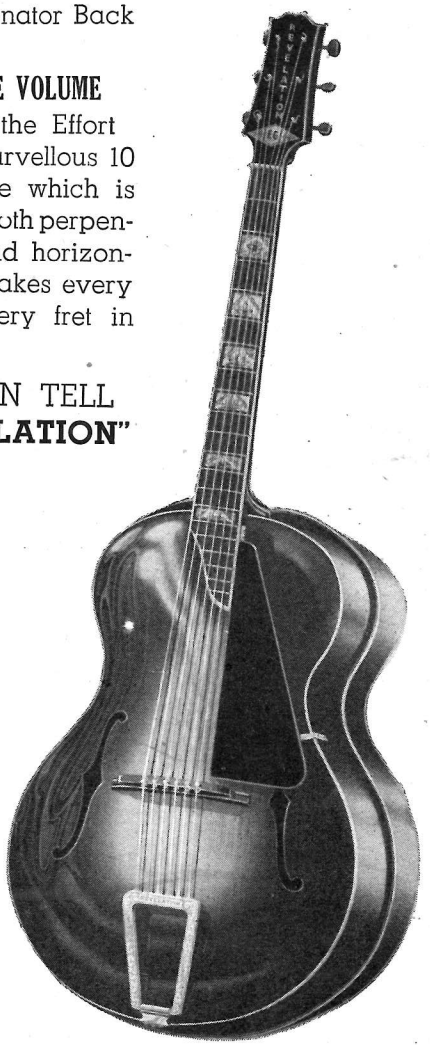

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at the time of writing, a London County Council poster advertising Evening Classes. Prominently displayed in the centre of the bill are two words which may or may not be intended to have a clever double meaning: "Study yourself."

And if players of the banjo, mandolin and guitar would like a final maxim, what could be better than the following: "The string that knows nothing of tension can never know much of music."

YES OR NO?

The most common fault in the playing of amateur bands is a lack of attack. The players are rarely together. They think individually instead of letting the conductor do the thinking and themselves concentrating their minds on his beat and the things he wants to express. A conductor may dash into his down beat with fine fervour, only to find that his forces have not responded exactly together. In the opening bars he has to make frantic gestures to establish the tempo he has in his mind but which has not been conveyed to the players.

Here is a little problem which should interest everyone who plays in a banjo, mandolin and guitar club or orchestra: If a conductor and the members of his orchestra are to be unanimous in the avoidance of loose playing, if they are going to play as one man, they must all know whether a sound should begin at the top or at the bottom of a beat.

Imagine a conductor beating three crotchets in a bar of triple time: the first down beat a vertical line, the second beat a horizontal line to the right, and the third an oblique line upwards, making a triangle with the other two. Should each sound start at the *beginning* of the beat?

Readers are asked to study this question carefully, and then decide either "yes" or "no," before turning to the answer which is given on page 8.

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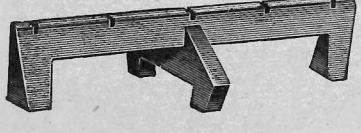

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row of taxis and private cars could be seen nightly ascending the Rue Pigalle.

I like to remember Gaston, the pianist, saying "Voila, Jacques, I make you the G" when we were about to tune up, and I like to visualise the faces of my good friends as they wished me "Bon retour."

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THE BANJO IN PAINTINGS AND SKETCHES

By G. A. KEELER.

In a series of articles I wrote some years ago describing the romance of banjo research, I mentioned the names of several more or less eminent artists who had introduced the banjo into their paintings or sketches. Among those mentioned was Altred Concanen, whose work was popular in the 1880's. This artist incorporated pictures of one or more banjos in many of the old minstrel songs for which he designed and illustrated the title pages.

In a book entiled "The Choice Humorous Works of Theodore Hook" there is a drawing by Concanen of a crowd in Berners Street. The story goes that Hook, the brilliant wit, was walking down this street one day when his attention was drawn by his companion to the very neat and modest appearance of a certain private house. "I'll lay you a guinea." said Hook to his friend, "that in one week from to-day that quiet, modest dwelling shall be the most famous in all London." The bet was taken. In the course of a few days Hook had written and sent one thousand letters conveying orders to various tradesmen, all to be delivered at the Berners Street house on the same day at one fixed hour—waggons of coal and potatoes, books and pictures, ices and cakes, etc. These came from all over London, and it is easy to imagine the pandemonium that was caused. In the centre of the drawing which illustrates this scene, a banjo is to be seen held aloft in mid-air, possibly with a view to avoiding damage.

Most of us like to see pictorial records of things in which we are keenly interested. I remember that in the corridor of the Guildhall Library, London, there formally hung a very fine oil painting by William Logsdail entitled "The Ninth of November." It shows the customary procession passing the Mansion House in the Mayoralty of Sir James Whitehead, November, 1888. In this magnificent canvas, which is of large size, Logsdail has included in the pavement crowd a nigger minstrel with a wood-rim banjo. This picture, by the way, has been removed to a place of greater safety since the beginning of the air attacks on London.

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A POINT OF VIEW

By J. F. RIVERS.

Although much has been written about the musical scale—mostly concerning its origin and development—little has been said concerning *why* it exists in its present form. This short article purposes to give a possible explanation.

In the first place, it is fairly safe to assume that the scale, as we know it, reached its final stage because it "sounded right." But why should it sound right? There must be some reason, and it may be this: that the intervals in the scale correspond to the intervals of the natural harmonics of a string.

A string naturally vibrates at a frequency according to its mass, length and tension. The frequency determines the pitch, and the variations of frequency (and consequently the pitch) of the harmonics adhere to an exact mathematical formula. For instance, consider the first harmonic, where the string is lightly touched at its exact middle and then plucked. The two halves then vibrate at twice the original frequency, and the resultant pitch is exactly an octave higher. In the second harmonic, the string vibrates in three equal parts at treble the frequency, and the pitch is consequently an octave and a fifth higher.

The string can't help itself: it is merely obeying the natural laws. Does it not follow that our own hearing apparatus may be subject to the same laws, and so accept the harmonic intervals as correct? After all, musical sounds and human beings are all part of the same universe.

Let us see how these harmonics compare with the scale. If a string is tuned to C, the first harmonic is C, the second is G, the third C, the fourth E, the fifth G, and so on. The notes mentioned give us doh, me, and soh. Now take the first new note of the sequence, which is G. The harmonics of that note (omitting repetitions) are G, B, D, F, etc., giving us soh, te, ray fah. Thus we have nearly a whole scale from just two notes. Incidentally, in these two harmonic series lie the very foundations of harmony. Note that the sequence (taking the C string) is C. G. and then a return to C again. Similarly, when we hear "doh, me, soh," and then "soh, te, ray," our ears instinctively crave the return to "doh, me, soh" again.

Taking the above into consideration, I venture to assert that, were we to go back to the beginning of music and make a fresh start, we would progress along almost the same lines all over again. Our scale would be the same, or almost the same again, because we, being as much a part of the universe as strings, would only accept as satisfactory those intervals of sound which are satisfactory to the natural laws.

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IF I RAN A BANJO CLUB

By BYRON DAVIES.

The writer of this article is an enthusiastic amateur banjoist of long standing. By profession he is an Organiser and Publicity man. He was engaged in that capacity at the Palais de Danse, Hammersmith, about the year 1920, when I played for a period of eighteen months as banjoist with the Ragpickers' Band at the same establishment. For many years we lost touch with each other until about twelve months ago Byron Davies called at 54-55, Piccadilly, to talk about the banjo and renew the old friendship. Recently he wrote and published a successful book entitled "How to Live One Hundred Per Cent." Believing that he would have something original and interesting to say to readers of "Pickings," I diffidently suggested that he should write a short article. Here it is.—E. G.

If I ran a Banjo Club it would be a commercial enterprise, encouraging my initiative, forcing my ingenuity to "make it pay"; it would give excellent value for money. It would run "Every Evening," possibly with certain "Matinee" sessions, possibly "Twice a day—all the year round." It would have central premises in London, and in smartness of decoration and equipment they would certainly be different from any thing yet seen.

There would be a cloakroom, with shelves for instrument cases. As one passed along to the club room his instrument would be put into both correct "tune" and "pitch." The chairs in the club room would be my special study: it might take me three months to find the right pattern—correct in height or adjustable in height, possibly with abbreviated elbow rests, possibly with a foot-rest (thrown easily "in" or "out" of position). The chairs would be fixed to the floor, and they would not be in straight lines: they would be "staggered" so that one player would not give another a smack in the face with a machine head! At the back of each chair would be a music desk, adjustable in height.

The music desk would only be used for solos. All concerted numbers would be reflected on an illuminated screen, possibly with the aid of an Epidiascope; all would read from the same copy, and there would be no sorting over of music. The only exceptions would be those playing "seconds."

The subscription would not be less than, say, one guinea, but more likely it would be two guineas a year. Everyone on each attendance would pay a small admission, possibly a shilling.

I would have a "Social" room, with a small Bar in one corner. I might even have a small room or two for lessons for the absolute beginner. These would, like the Club Room, be tasteful, clean, artistic, cheery, well-lit—nothing should be too good for Banjoists!

Now, what about the programme? Well, here's an outline:—

Monday and Thursday: Grade A solos only.

Tuesday and Friday: Grade B.

Wednesday and Saturday: Grade C.

Saturday matinee: Mixed.

Sunday mornings: Beginners.

Perhaps we would vary this with special "Motif" Nights, such as "Cammeyer Night," "Grimshaw Night," "Morley Night," or, by a careful selection of Solos, "March," "Waltz," "Chinese," "Russian," "Operatic," etc., nights.

Is the scheme too ambitious? Would banjoists give it support? Are there enough of them to justify such a Club? Could we affiliate in some way banjoists living in the country, so that they could have a wonderful time at the Club when visiting London? Am I the man who can pioneer the idea? These are questions to which I would like an answer, and I invite anyone who thinks himself or herself willing to join such a Club to write me, of course, without incurring any obligation in the first instance. Address your letter to Byron Davies, 7, Lexham Gardens, London, W.8 (or c/o "Pickings").

In conclusion, I would draw a comparison with the business in which I am actively engaged, i.e., Ballroom Dancing. At one time Dances were held in Schoolrooms, Town Halls, Baths, Halls, and such like places, and only on specified dates. I was the first man to become identified with the idea of a specially-designed "Home" of Dancing, running twice a day all the year round. At the time there was no demand for such facilities, and it was predicted that the idea would only be a "nine days' wonder." Strangely enough, the existence of the facilities created the demand . . . to such extent that to-day I am identified with similar establishments in a dozen "key" cities. With such a comparison, it does not seem that my idea is too fanciful, too imaginative, too idealistic.

Who can say where it would lead? Might it not do a lot to bring the Banjo back to the amazing popularity it had in the days of my glorious youth?

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FIFTEEN YEARS IN PARIS WITH A BANJO

By JACK ASHTON.

composer of the popular banjo solo "Osmania."

In the year 1922 I was fulfilling an engagement as dance banjoist at a British South Coast holiday resort. Being invited to take the part of wicket-keeper at a local cricket match I unfortunately broke the third finger of my left hand, and thus being unable to continue playing in the dance band my engagement was summarily terminated.

Later on a post was offered me in the Paris office of a big Anglo-American corporation, where the work consisted mostly in translating contracts and other documents into English. This, however, came to an end in a little over 12 months, by which time the broken finger enabled serious playing to be resumed.

A few evenings after leaving the firm two of the senior members met me in a well-known dancing resort called the "Perè Tranquil." One of them, unknown to me, had a heated argument with the dance band leader about his banjoist. This ended in the leader saying, "If you can bring a better one I pay you two bottles of champagne." The two gentlemen came up to me, told me what had happened, stood me a supper, and urged me to play as "their honour was at stake." The stipulation was for two dances only. When I went on the platform the orchestra greeted me with rather cynical smiles and handed me a banjo with the first string tuned to "E"; in other words, a guitar in disguise. I quickly lowered the "E" to "D." We started the first number, and the orchestra played very softly all the time. Then followed the usual tangos, a couple of waltzes, and some fox-trots concluded the session, which was far in excess of the couple of dances originally agreed upon. The orchestra players were undoubtedly sportsmen. They became very friendly, and were greatly interested in the tuning of the banjo, and I remember writing and explaining the notation on the tablecloth owing to my lack of knowledge of French musical terms. The leader then escorted me and my friends to a table on which reposed the bottles of champagne ordered by him. As a matter of fact, actually eight of these were consumed before we left. The (to them) new tuning of the banjo brought forth from the orchestra the comment that "Monsieur must be American." In this they were nearer the mark than they imagined, as my grandfather came from Tennessee and an uncle from Norfolk (Virginia). The latter used to play about on a six-string smooth-arm banjo.

My early banjo tuition came from a pupil of Vess. L. Ossman, who was very keen on runs and bass string work. Even now Ossman's "Smiler," "Whipped Cream" and "Whitewash Man" are among my most popular solos, all now played with a pick owing to an accident which affected the muscles of the right thumb and stopped finger-playing for ever.

Very soon after my adventure at the "Perè Tranquil" the band leader engaged me to play with his orchestra at the fashionable Hotel Haussman, and one New Year's Eve the management tuned in the hotel radio to England to get "Big Ben" chiming midnight out of deference to the large number of English visitors on the floor. Several of these remembered me from my Murray's Club days in London, 1918-1921. One afternoon in the Café Graf, adjoining the old Moulin Rouge, a dark little man with a pleasant face and humorous manner got into conversation with me, and after several drinks asked if I was "M. L'Américain who played in the 'Perè Tranquil.'" On being told "Yes," he said he played the accordion, and took me to some rehearsal rooms in the Rue de Douai, and soon demonstrated that he was a fine player.

Next day the banjo was taken along, and we did some pretty hard work in that little room, which ended up in my becoming his partner. For about five years we worked together in most of the dancing resorts of Montmartre as a speciality turn. We also showed at the Cirque Medrano, where we met the English music-hall artist from Bolton who has no arms. He lights a cigar, uses a knife and fork at table, plays a cornet, and paints a sketch all with his feet. He told me he *could* drive a car, but that the authorities refused to grant him a licence.

My partner took a great liking to "Tattoo." I played a special counter-melody in the third movement. This popular composition soon became a star number. One summer my partner went to his brother's farm near the Belgian frontier for a vacation, and, much to my regret, Paris saw him no more. It was whispered to me that he was "in the shade of the sun" (slang for gaol) after being caught trying to smuggle in contraband on his way back to Paris.

Unfortunately, owing to the recurrence of an old war trouble contracted in the Dardanelles, it became imperative to pack up and return home to England, where I spent some months in a private hospital. To-day, when I look back to my departure from the Royal, I see the two partners who owned the place, the dance hostesses and the staff, each shaking hands with me in turn, and wishing me "Bon voyage et bon retour." Often my thoughts turn to them, and I wonder what has now become of them all. Will Paris ever again be quite the same! Personally, I shall always see it as it was during the happy fifteen years I spent there—when the lights were bright and an endless

JOTTINGS

The Willesden Mandolin Club, under the direction of Mr. Mancini, made a successful appearance recently at a Sunday Charity Concert held at the Wembley Town Hall. A very high standard of playing was demonstrated by the players, and the items were greatly enjoyed by the large audience present. New members (mandolinists or guitarists) will be heartily welcomed.

* * *

The many players who have from time to time written to us for copies of the banjo solo "Return of the Regiment" may like to know that this solo has been reprinted, and is again available for first and second banjos and piano, both finger and plectrum styles of playing. The solo complete is 2s., and is sent post free if cash is enclosed with order.

* * *

Glasgow readers are reminded that the Banjoliers Banjo Club, under the direction of Mr. John Hynd, meets every Thursday at 8 p.m. at 18, St. Peter's Street, St. George's Cross. All players of fretted instruments are cordially invited to attend.

* * *

After an absence from London of nearly three years, Miss Lily Ridler has now returned home to 14, Franklin Road, Penge, where she is giving lessons on the banjo, mandolin and guitar, the latter instrument in both Spanish and Hawaiian styles of playing.

* * *

Alfred Kealoa Life is at present on tour with the Felix Mendelssohn combination, featuring his super-electric E.G. Hawaiian guitar. A short film has just been made for Pathe Gazette. In the near future this Hawaiian combination of players is booked for a lengthy engagement at Blackpool, probably at the Winter Gardens.

* * *

Kathleen and Mary MacGarvey, billed as "The World's Youngest Broadcast Banjoists," have been appearing with extraordinary success in the review "Come to the Show" at the Empire Theatre, Belfast. These talented artistes are the daughters of Jack MacGarvey, the well-known vaudeville, recording and broadcasting banjoist.

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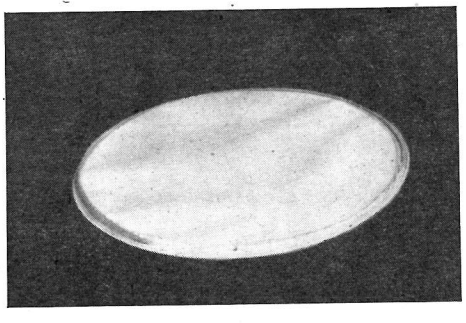

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DEATH OF OLLY OAKLEY

Olly Oakley, probably the best known and most popular zither-banjoist, has died at his home, East Sheen, Middlesex. He was 66.

Oakley had a pleasing stage personality, and knew how to enthuse his audiences. Before playing his programme item he would entertain his hearers with snatches of popular tunes of the day. He would start his audience humming one tune and before they realised what he was doing he would be on to something else. Oakley recorded scores of banjo solos, and undoubtedly did more than any other public performer to popularise the instrument.

His published solos include "Rakoczy March," specially arranged for his own playing; "Kowalski's Marche Hongroise," "Sweet Jasmine," "Dashwood Quickstep," "Winifred Mazurka," and many others.

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Answer to Question on Page 2

No. The sound does *not* start at the beginning or top of the beat but at the end or bottom of the beat; that is, at its point where the baton or stick rests momentarily before it changes direction. The exact duration of the beat being the time between this momentary rest and the next.

Joseph Lewis, the author of "Conducting Without Fears," says: "I was told very decidedly by a young student, on one occasion, that the sound *must* begin at the top of the beat because in the triangle diagram of the three beats for a bar of three-four time the crotchet duration of each beat is the length of each line. 'If,' he argued, 'the sound does not begin until the *bottom* of the beat, then you are robbing the bar of a whole beat.'"

"That is what one gets by being led away by the lure of a diagram. The argument is a good example of a statement which may seem all right in theory, but is all wrong in practice. The diagram is to show merely the *direction* of the beats, not their duration. You may safely adopt the principle that the sound should begin at the bottom of the beat."

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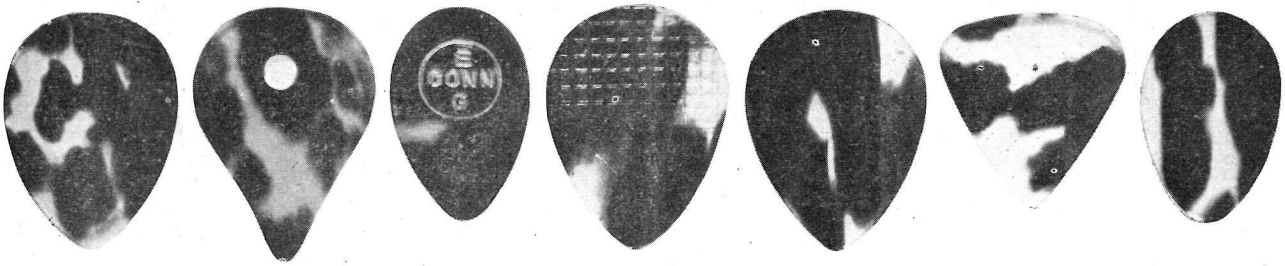

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